WHIRRAKEE

July 2010 Vol. 31 No. 6

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MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO

FIELD NATURALISTS CLUB

Bendigo Field Naturalists Club Inc.
Address for correspondence: PO Box 396, Bendigo 3552
ISSN 0812-423X

Office Bearers for 2009 - 2010

President	Jan Orr	5443 5668
Senior Vice President	*position vacant*	
Junior Vice President	Matthew Comer	0409 162627
Secretary	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Minute Secretary	Glenise Moors/Rod Orr	54396254
Treasurer	Rob Moors	54396254
Membership Officer	Anne Bridley	5442 6188
Excursion organiser	*position vacant*	
Syllabus organiser	Ben Goonan	
Librarian	Diana Collier (an assistant is still required)	5443 0137
Garden Convenor/Secretary	Matthew Comer	0409 162 627
Hall Management	Maurie Lewis (assisted by Rob Moors)	0407 427179
Whirrakee contact	Sabine Wilkens e-mail: s.wilkens@latrobe.edu.au	5443 2797

Membership of the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club is open to all those interested in Natural History. The subscription rates are: Single $34; Family $40; Concession: Single $28.50; Family $34. *Whirrakee* subscription only is $34.

General meetings are held on the second Wednesday of each month. The venue for General meetings is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square. The meeting starts with a 10 minute thing-of-the night natural history segment. The invited speaker starts at 8:00pm and meetings conclude with supper. The Annual Meeting is held in September.

Committee meetings are held on the third Wednesday of each month at 6:00pm. Members of the Committee are the Office Bearer listed above and the following members: Bob Ruddick, Ben Goonan, Liz Graham, Glenise Moors, Joy Clusker, plus *one position vacant*

Excursions are conducted regularly and are advertised on the diary page of the *Whirrakee*. The assembly point for excursions is the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, unless otherwise specified. Several interclub field naturalist campouts are held every year. For occasional **Fauna Group Excursions**, phone Maurie Lewis on: 0407427179

The Bendigo Field Naturalists Club has one sub-group (the Fauna Study Group) and is actively involved in local conservation issues. An **indigenous garden** has been established around the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building. Working bees are advertised on the *Whirrakee* diary page.

Fauna Study Group: meets on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7:30pm in the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building.

Chairman: John Burtonclay, Fadersons Lane, Mandurang (5439 5710)
Secretary: Bill Holsworth, 13 Nabilla Crs., Bendigo (5443 4063)
Equipment Officer: Maurie Lewis (0407 427179)

Bird Observing: Club members conduct regular bird surveys. Please contact Anne Bridley 5449 3479 or Glenise Moors 5439 6254 for details. Special bird observations should be reported to Anne Bridley 5449 3479.
To propose bird observing excursions please contact Kerrie Norris 5447 8017.

Front cover photo?...see page 2.

WHIRRAKEE

Monthly Newsletter of the Bendigo Field Naturalist Club
Vol. 31, No. 6, July 2010
Whirrakee takes its name from the Whirrakee Wattle (*Acacia williamsonii*) which is virtually endemic to the Bendigo region

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Authors are responsible for the accuracy of the information they use and also for any opinions expressed in their articles. Contributions will be included as soon as possible after they are received, although articles received more than one week after the monthly General Meeting will probably be too late for inclusion in the next issue of *Whirrakee*.
Articles in *Whirrakee* may be reproduced, but permission should be obtained from the Bendigo Field Naturalists Club, and acknowledgment should be given to the author and the Club. Some back issues are still available on request.

Editor's Note
The new-look, colourful Whirrakee published last month was received favourably by members, and so the experiment continues. In order to get a better idea what the club can offer, we are trying out various ways to include colour photos into the magazine. This month we only have the centre spread in colour. Winter is obviously a very colourful season, if you only look closely enough, and I even had to leave out some of the brightly coloured fungi. Perhaps some people are 'fungussed-out', as Rod Orr was (only for one day though!!), but I will never be! Enjoy, and send more photos.

Front Page Illustration – Photographer: Joy Clusker
Two months ago, the front cover of the May *Whirrakee* featured autumn impressions of the district, and amongst these was *Pterostylis revoluta*, the Autumn Greenhood. The seasons have moved on and on the June club excursion along the Great Dividing Trail, two more greenhoods were spotted. On the left is *Pterostylis parviflora,* the Tiny Greenhood and on the right, *Pterostylis longifolia*, the Tall Greenhood.

Short Notices

July General Meeting
Jon Starks from the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority will be talking about the "WCMA Bird Monitoring Project".

All welcome

Job available
As a consequence of the departure of two valuable committee members (Richard and Gemma), there are now two vacancies on the committee. Can you help?

Garden working bee
Matthew is coordinating a weeding working bee at the garden on Saturday 10th July. Starting at 1pm

Hopefully you can come

July Excursion
Great Dividing Trail Flora & Fauna Survey, Sandhurst Reservoir area, **Sat 17 July 2010**.
We will be continuing the survey from where we finished last time. As well as plants & birds, we may find fungi.
Meet at clubrooms at 8:45 am. This is a half day excursion, we will be back by 12:30pm.
Bring: binoculars, notebook, camera, morning tea, cold weather & rain gear, field guides.
Contact: Anne Bridley ph 5442 6188.

(for other excursions planned for 2010, see page 10)

VEAC Remnant Native Vegetation Investigation
This investigation has published a discussion paper, the contents of which will be discussed at a meeting in Bendigo on the 20th July between 10am and 2pm. The place is yet to be confirmed (contact Stuart Fraser closer to the date).

It is important for the club to be present, as it is the beginning of the push to have 20 extra areas placed into reserves, the Wellsford being one.

June Notes, Reports and Observations

The Colour Supplement in Whirrakee experiment has met with general approval as a worthwhile improvement to the quality of our magazine. Colour photos were requested by Jan so that this may continue.

Bullarto Fungus excursion – John Lindner reported on a successful and enjoyable visit to this interesting forest. Those who attended the excursion will have shown some of their photos following the Committee meeting at 7:30, Wed 16 June; all interested members were invited to attend. *If you missed it, some more photos of fungi are on page 4…(ed.)*

Garden Weeding – Matthew Comer
Report on last Working Bee - good attendance (10-11 members); considerable good work was done. Saturday afternoon seems a more suitable time for these working-bees. *See advertisement for next working bee on this page.*

Excursions
Flying Foxes was planned for June 23; 5pm, organised by Matthew Comer. Anne Bridley announced the continuation of Great Dividing Trail excursions (June 12). *See this page for the next one.* John Lindner has offered to organise an excursion during September.

Request from Geoff Morris at Phoenix FM for regular Field Nats contribution in a regular Natural History time slot; also requested speakers (one or more) on a regular basis – any offers?

Observations
Jane Cleary
Travelled to 60 Degrees N in the Shetland Islands, UK. Puffin numbers have increased there since fishing practices have changed - considered to be due to cessation of fishing for Sand Eels, the favoured food of Puffins.

Black Cockatoos are still around Epsom in small numbers (3) - in pine trees along Bendigo Creek.

Matthew Comer
At Mandurang (Tannery Lane), 4 Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos - late May; a Fantail Cuckoo calling - 7th June; a Silvereye imitating a Horsefields Bronze Cuckoo has been heard several times recently.

Glenise Moors
Daley Lane: Male Female Red-cap Robin pair feeding in an area sheltered from the cold wind. Other small birds were with them - Yellow-rumped Thornbill; Yellow Thornbill; Grey Fantail; Spinebill; Brown Thornbill; Superb fairy Wren; Weebill.

Heather Roberts reported (via Glenise) the presence of Spiny-cheeked Honeyeaters (at least 4) near Loddon River (at Eddington on Loddon), very active and noisy in the house garden - possibly feeding on peppercorns & hawthorn; also feeding in *Eucalyptus leucoxylon* (almost finished flowering).

Kerrie Norris
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (9) were seen flying West in Allingham Street near Kangaroo Flat Railway Station.

Ian Magee
Flying Foxes seen in Olympic Parade area; North Huntly Landcare Group invitation to BFNC to help with revegetation.; seed collection.

Elaine Doling
Flying Foxes have been coming every night into the Ironbarks (initially~100/night) numbers have been dropping - now down to about 10 to 12 as the trees stop flowering; Rosellas are in nesting boxes after much argument over them has now been settled - breeding?

Joy Clusker
Large feathers were found at Mt Alexander - identified by John Burtonclay as Powerful Owl wing feathers - he thought that the bird had probably been shot.

Annette & Crawford Mouat
Eastern Spinebills stayed around their house in Fadersons Lane, Mandurang, all year from 1995 until November 2009 when they disappeared - they returned in April 2010. Nectar producing plants were available during the birds' Summer 2009 - 2010 absence. Maybe other honeyeaters were more dominant and plentiful.
Yellow-tailed Black Cockatoos (4) were sighted several times (7th June).

More about fungi... by Rod Orr

After the June *Whirrakee,* which focused on fungi, Elaine Doling and a few other Club members have asked about the edibility of some of the fungi that they (and we) have found during our recent excursions.

A good example is *Lactarius deliciosus* which is supposed to be quite pleasant when cooked appropriately, but why bother running the risk of confusion with other similar species which are not so good, or the possibility that different individuals may experience differences in the palatability or digestibility of some of the wild fungi like this one. A satisfactory and much safer option is available in most Greengrocers or the Fruit & Veg sections of Supermarkets. Anyway, for those interested, *L. deliciosus* is pictured on page 5.

A really nice reference, that all gatherers of wild mushrooms should read before eating any of them is: Talbot, P.H.B. 'Notes on Some Edible and Poisonous Mushrooms'; in Cleland, J.B. *Toadstools and Mushrooms and other Larger Fungi of South Australia*; Handbooks of the Flora and Fauna of South Australia Handbooks Committee Government Printer South Australia; 1976 (Reprint).

Especially interesting is his discussion of the problems of identifying mushrooms, which are safe to eat, before eating them He has graphic descriptions of the dire consequences of getting it wrong and eating even a small amount of one of the really poisonous species which often closely resemble an edible fungus. ...continued on page 7

Lactarius deliciosus (Saffron Milk-cap). The name makes this one sound very edible indeed, but read Rod Orr's article on page 4 first before planning a meal. Photographer: Rod Orr

Here are some more fungi from recent excursions by Joy Clusker

Galerina unicolor _ Bullarto- May
↵

Stropharia semiglobata "dung round head"
Great Dividing Trail excursion – June

Dictydiaethalium plumbeum – red slime mould – Eaglehawk June

*Boletus barragensis*_ Bullarto- May

Which one of these two is *Entoloma viridomarginatum ?*- (Mt Alexander – June):.. see back cover

...and here is a 'non-fungus image' from Annette and Crawford Mouat (see story, page 7)
↵

A visiting Sparrowhawk
It's that centre front toe that is much longer in the Sparrowhawk than the Gosshawk - this photo shows that feature quite clearly - also the collar and the wide-open, bright yellow, staring eye. By contrast, the Gosshawk has a very prominent brow-ridge, which is absent in this bird.

...continued from page 4

Cleland, himself, describes a few very graphic examples in the section 'Poisoning by Toadstools' that generally had unfortunate results, although one of his incidents describes the hilarity induced by the accidental consumption of a mixture of wild mushrooms without permanent damage to the diners.

The really curious thing is the length of time (sometimes days) that the victims of fungus poisoning have, to suffer the consequences and to think about their gloomy prospects, if they do manage to stage some sort of recovery. This article gives some insights into how poisonous mushrooms act and why fungus poisoning should be avoided.

Because of his medical background, Cleland was the one giving the especially graphic details of lingering death, rather than Talbot.

A visit by a Sparrowhawk

The circumstances surrounding the sighting, reported by Annette and Crawford Mouat at the last general meeting:

Andrew Mouat of Riddells Creek went out to close the fowl pen at 6.00pm on Tuesday night and the poodle dog, who accompanied him, was extremely restless and excited, but Andrew could not see anything untoward.

By 8.00pm, when the poodle was still very agitated and continually barking Andrew went out and shone the torch into the chicken pen adjoining the fowl pen to find himself uncomfortably close to some eyes staring at him, hence the photos of the bird which, after much careful observation, research and with the help of bird experts, is likely to have been a collared sparrowhawk (we had considered a brown gosshawk also). There is a small hatch in the fowl pen at ground level and the sparrowhawk must have entered at that point. The fowls in the pen were quite unconcerned with this visitor.

Andrew says that the fowl pen attracts Indian miners, sparrows, pigeons and an occasional crow but never a hawk before.

Something is knocking the state's owls off their perches

by John Elder, via Jill Redwood via Richard Goonan and then Ben Goonan...

What's happened to Victoria's carnivorous owls? A significant number have vanished, and the Department of Sustainability and Environment isn't sure what's going on.

It's assumed the top end of the woodland food chain is either starving to death, because its food source has been killed off by the drought and fires, or it is relocating to parts unknown, but it will take years to find an answer.

The DSE has been monitoring the owl populations - including that of the powerful owl, Australia's largest owl - since 2000. Since then, detection rates in South Gippsland and the Bunyip State Park have dropped by half. In some areas of the Bunyip State Park - half of which was lost to the Black Saturday fires - detections of the sooty owl have dropped to a third.

DSE owl specialist Ed McNab says: "We don't know what's happened to them. We can only assume that drought has played a major role. We noticed the downward trend before the fires. They're very mobile birds, but the fires would have had an impact on their prey."

Powerful and sooty owls, both officially listed as vulnerable, mainly eat sugar gliders and ringtail possums. The possums in particular are known to have little resistance to chronic hot weather, and their failure to thrive in the drought is probably the main reason why owl numbers have dropped. While owls may have escaped the Black Saturday fires, many possums would have been incinerated.

Mr McNab says the smaller carnivorous birds, such as the barking owl, are able to sustain themselves on insects. Powerful and sooty owls can also eat rabbits and birds such as magpies and kookaburras, but they need to make the change in their diet before energy loss reduces their ability to effectively hunt. "They'll either starve or take something else," said Mr McNab.

Equally disastrous for the owls was the loss of old trees with large hollows that they require for nesting. They might have shifted elsewhere to recolonise, but this would mean taking over an already occupied territory. "And there tends to be a home-ground advantage in these battles," said Mr McNab.
The occupying bird has inside knowledge of the territory and a greater capacity to defend its patch, because its energy store will be higher. Flying great distances in search of food saps the strength from large birds and even causes them to starve.

The DSE's biodiversity team leader for West Gippsland, Dr Rolf Willig, said the top order carnivores were "an indicator species as to the well-being of the ecosystem. Theoretically, if they're happy, the rest are happy."

For five years Dr Willig has been running a playback monitoring program in South Gippsland, where recordings of owl calls are played into the dark and answering calls are recorded. The number of birds answering calls have dropped significantly this year.

"The results indicate we may be having a delayed reaction from the fires," he said. "The possums not actually killed in the fires might have been exposed afterward, and the owls picked them off, eating all the food that was left."
It will take years to find out what's happened. "And not just three or five years. We'll be out here for a long time," said Dr Willig.

Jill Redwood's comment:
A sad but interesting item on the loss of owls across our forests - loss of hollow bearing trees and the fires being the main cause we suspect. And to think that 40-50% of areas burnt in the 03 and 06 fires were due to govt back burns going out of control. These are the very owls our lawyers were arguing for at Brown Mt.

Also - in last week's Weekly Times we had 13 letters printed responding to the logging industry's piece which responded to the Weekly Times opinion piece against logging native forests. Of the 13 letters, 4 were anti-environment, one neutral and 7 were criticising logging and the government. Good work letter writers (if yours didn't get in, it would have helped someone else's get past the post).

Jill Redwood Coordinator
Environment East Gippsland Inc
(6800 Bonang Rd Goongerah)
Locked Bag 3 ORBOST Vic 3888
Ph (03) 5154 0145

Unknown 2008 Moth identity
by Geraldine Harris of Castlemaine FNC

I have just been reading an old *Whirrakee* (Dec 2008). When I saw the photo of the unknown moth, it was very like one we found on a recent excursion in the Muckleford Forest last month. In Peter Marriotts's book Moths of Victoria - Part 2, Tiger Moths & Allies (Noctuoidea (A) on page 7 there are two photos of a female Boisduval's Autumn Moth - *Oenosandra boisduvalii*.
Could this be the moth in your December 2008 Magazine?

Editor's note: *I concur with Geraldine's identification. Some things just take their time. I shouldn't be impatient, when waiting on members' responses to questions posed in the magazine – Thanks, Geraldine!*
The author of the moth reference mentioned above was our speaker at the May general meeting…

May General Meeting – Speaker: Peter Marriot – 'Victorian Moths'

by Sabine Wilkens

Peter Marriot has been interested in all things natural for as long as he can remember. Luckily, he is also interested in teaching about those things. So after a long career as a school teacher, Peter joined the Australian Museum as a volunteer. His affair with Victorian moths began in 1989, when he picked up a book on moths and butterflies and realised how little was known about them.

There are over 70 families of Lepidoptera (moths and butterflies) in Australia, with over 20 000 species (only about 12 000 of which have been named). Butterflies, although the most well known Lepidopterans, make up the minority of this group, only about 300 species are known in Australia.

What distinguishes moths and butterflies? There are many pointers, but most of them have exceptions (e.g. clubbed antennae of butterflies are also found in some moths, the wings held upright above the back is also not a watertight feature to identify a butterfly, although mostly it is. Bright colouring and a day-flying habit are, once again, attributed to butterflies, but there are also exceptions. The one reliable distinguishing feature is not easily seen: moths have a wing-coupling device called a frenulum, which no butterfly (bar one species in Queensland) possesses.
So… in reality, butterflies are also just moths.

It is hard enough to declare a large mammal or a bird extinct, but such a declaration are far harder for invertebrates. But what a challenge to find a moth that hasn't been seen for over a hundred years…One such example is the cryptic Sun Moth, *Synemon theresa*. It feeds on Wallaby Grass and was last seen in Beechworth and Ararat in 1907. It only flies for the first two weeks of December, but it has been re-discovered in South Australia, so why not here? Peter discussed a few other rare moths including some that are becoming rare, like Emperor Gum Moth, *Opodiphthera eucalypti*. In his school teaching days, Peter got kids to study and raise these caterpillars in classes. Why are they declining? Perhaps they are not, and it is just one of those…'in my days…' anecdotal things, but some people believe that European wasps are directly or indirectly responsible.

Peter also talked about Bogong Moths and how it is said that they frighten bees and cause losses to beekeepers, when present in large numbers. Stuart Fraser could, in fact, confirm this from personal experience, and quite a healthy discussion ensued on the topic of the identity and effect of Bogong Moths on bees and honey production.

After enthralling the audience with beautiful and unusual moth pictures and interesting stories (there are a number of wingless moths, for example), Peter introduced his big project, which is to document every Victorian moth (2000-4000 in all!) and make images and information about them available to the public. To achieve this, he and his close colleagues are planning to publish a series of booklets, covering selected families of moths.

Two books have already been printed with an initial grant from the Norman Wettenhall Foundation, and the money raised by the sale of these will finance further booklets. Their titles are 'Moths of Victoria' Part 1, Silk Moths and Allies (2008) and Part 2, Tiger Moths and Allies (2009) and they are published by the Entomological Society of Australia. Each books comes with a CD that has additional images and more information. They are 12 dollars each, and very highly recommended for any moth lover. Those of you keen to order a copy, this is the website: http://www.entsocvic.org.au/

There is so much more to study. For example the moths of the Otways and Wilsons's promontory and their overlap with Tasmanian moths, the untold number of mallee moth species and the effect of fire on these…and all the while, the species list for Victoria grows as moths are spotted that have never been spotted in the state before, perhaps due to a changing climate or busy traffic of goods, including food plants, between our states.

An inspiring talk – I bought both books!

Bendigo Field Naturalist's Club – Speaker Syllabus for July - December 2010

DATE	PRESENTER	TITLE
14/07/10	Jon Starks, Wimmera Catchment Management Authority	"WCMA Bird Monitoring Project"
11/08/10	Associate Professor Ian Lunt, Charles Sturt University	"Our changing forests and woodlands"
8/09/10	Dr Andrea Kodym, The University of Melbourne	"Lepidosperma (Sword-sedge) Research"
13/10/10	Rodger Elliot AM, Author and Horticulturalist	"The 35-year Journey, Australian Plants A – Z"
10/11/10	Neil Macfarlane, Victorian Malleefowl Recovery Group Inc.	"The Malleefowl Recovery Project"
8/12/10	Rod Orr, Bendigo Field Naturalists Club	"The Canning Stock Route: Plants"

Bendigo Field Naturalist's Club – Excursions July - December 2010

July: Great Dividing Trail – see page 3 for details

August: **Leader:** Jane Cleary.
Date: Sat. August 14th
Location: The Black Rock/Kamarooka area of the Greater Bendigo National Park. All day, bring BYO lunch and gear suitable for a day in the bush.
Depart: BFNC clubrooms, Old High St Golden Square. Departing 9:30 am.
Main focus: botany and birds.

September: Prime time of the year, we're still waiting for an interested person with excursion ideas.

October: **Leader:** John Lindner.
Date: Sunday October 24th
Location: Coliban Main Water Channel and associated bushland
Bring: Morning and afternoon tea and lunch. Backpack, carry your own supplies, camera, magnifying glass and binoculars.
Length: You can come for the morning or stay all day.
Subject: Wild flowers, including many orchids, and birds. In addition a 3km walk along the channel brings you to some interesting 19th century structures that are part of Bendigo's old water system

November: No planned excursion as yet
December: No planned excursion

Diary

The General, Bird Observers Group and Fauna Study Group meetings are held at the Golden Square Senior Citizens Building, Old High Street, Golden Square, unless otherwise indicated.

General Meetings

Wednesday, July 14 **7.30pm**
Jon Starks from the Wimmera Catchment Management Authority will be talking about the "WCMA Bird Monitoring Project".

Excursions

Great Dividing Trail Flora & Fauna Survey, Sandhurst Reservoir area, **Sat 17 July 2010**.
We will be continuing the survey from where we finished last time. As well as plants & birds, we may find fungi.
Meet at clubrooms at 8:45 am. This is a half day excursion, we will be back by 12:30pm.
Bring: binoculars, notebook, camera, morning tea, cold weather & rain gear, field guides.
Contact: Anne Bridley ph 5442 6188.

Fauna Group

This group normally meets (in the clubrooms) on the fourth Wednesday of the month at 7.30pm. New and seasoned Club members are most welcome to attend.

For occasional **Fauna Group Excursions**, phone Maurie Lewis on: 0407427179

Garden working bee
Matthew is coordinating a weeding working bee at the garden on Saturday 10th July.
Starting at 1pm

Hopefully you can come

Wildlife Rescue & Information Network Inc.

W.R.I.N. is an organisation dedicated to the care of orphaned, sick or injured native animals. It is fully endorsed by the Dept of Sustainability and Environment.
Please call our Emergency Number for Help for Fauna in Need. Phone: 0419 356433.

Centre for Environmental Management's 2010 Research Seminar Series

The speaker at the seminar will be Cameron Steele. Cameron will be speaking on " Lost Waters"
Date: 9th July 2010
Time: 12:00 - 1:30
Venue: F301, Mt Helen Campus, University of Ballarat

Australian Naturalists' Network – Advance Notice

Sixth ANN Get-together
24 August - 4 September 2010
Host: Chinchilla FNC, Qld
Further enquiries: Kath Truscott, email: ann2010@bordernet.com.au

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SEANA Spring Camp 2010

Foster North, South Gippsland
Friday 15 - Monday 18 October 2010
Registration & deposit due by 16 July 2010
Contact: Wendy Savage ph. 5634 2246, email wsavage@dcsi.net.au or Phil Rayment ph. 5174 1730, email philrayment@dcsi.net.au

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...continued from page 6:

Lighting during photographing and stage of maturity can make fungi appear quite different. Both of the images on page 6 are of *E. viridomarginatum*. Rod Orr took the one on the left and he writes: This fungus is well named because the gills really do have dark green edges. The spores from this green fungus (the gills are green all over too) are pink!